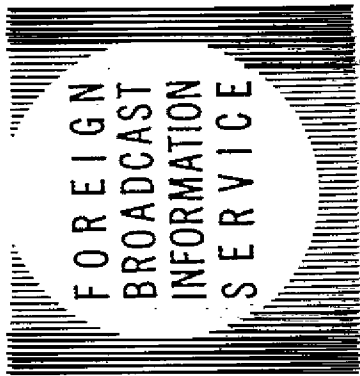


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# TRENDS

*in Communist Propaganda*

**Confidential**  
25 AUGUST 1971  
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## BOLIVIA

While Soviet media have typically devoted negligible attention to the 19-22 August coup in Bolivia that ousted leftist President Gen. Juan Jose Torres, Havana has been vocal from the outset in expressing support for the Bolivian "people" against the "counterrevolutionary" plotters. In an interview in Santiago, Chile on the 21st, Cuban Foreign Minister Raul Roa saw the events in La Paz as "an American battle, not exclusively Bolivia's." Havana propaganda has pictured the coup in these terms, charging that the Bolivian "reactionaries" had backing from the United States, Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina and quoting Chilean and Peruvian spokesmen on the need to defend their gains against "reaction" and "counterrevolution."

By the 21st, authoritative Cuban comment was drawing doctrinal morals from the Bolivian experience, picturing it in the context of a continent-wide struggle in which the balance is being weighted increasingly on the side of revolution. In militant passages carrying echoes of Cuban propaganda in the early 1960's, an editorial in the party organ GRANMA pronounced it the "duty" of all Latin American revolutionaries to "help the Bolivian people regain their revolutionary posture" and assured the Bolivians of Cuba's "material" as well as moral support.

## HAVANA VIEWS BOLIVIAN "SETBACK" AS PREDICTABLE BUT REVERSIBLE

The notion that any Latin American regime moving in a revolutionary direction faces the constant threat of a coup from the right has long been a staple of Cuban propaganda, as part and parcel of the dictum that armed struggle is the only sure route to revolutionary power. Against this background, Havana now calls the Bolivian coup "expected" and "inevitable" but views it as a temporary "setback" and holds it up as an object lesson for revolutionaries throughout the hemisphere. In line with Castro's portrayal of a growing revolutionary trend in Latin America, a Havana radio talk on 23 August saw the three days of "bloody battle" in La Paz as proof that it is becoming "increasingly difficult for the fascist military to stage a bloodless coup." And GRANMA's 24 August editorial spelled out the doctrinal lesson: "The Bolivian people's experience has demonstrated 'the possibilities

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of armed action, not only in the rural areas but also in the cities, when all methods of struggle are combined intelligently and firmly."

GRANMA depicted the revolutionary trend as inexorable and bound to assert itself with greater force. It praised the Bolivian people for having "written a heroic page in the book of Latin American history"--a new round in a continuous revolutionary struggle of which Che Guevara's abortive guerrilla venture had been the first major battle, foredoomed as Guevara's guerrillas were by overwhelming military odds against it.

GRANMA's explanation that the forces of the people were defeated by their "overwhelming disadvantage in weaponry" was developed after the fact, as a rationale for the failure of a resistance movement Havana media had portrayed in optimistic terms during the period of the coup. On 20 August, for example, Havana spoke of a "battle for liberation" being waged heroically by "the people," the peasants, students, miners, workers of the Labor Central (COS), noncommissioned military officers, and the La Paz Colorados regiment commanded by Maj. Ruben Sanchez, described as "strongly revolutionary" with "strong connections to the popular sectors." Havana broadcasts publicized messages of solidarity with the Bolivian "people" from Cuban mass organizations as well as from Chilean political and labor groups, and Foreign Minister Roa recalled in his interview in Chile on the 21st that the Cuban Government had more than once expressed "its strongest solidarity and support for the revolutionary movement" in Bolivia.

Castro had been moving cautiously toward endorsement of the Torres government in the months preceding the coup, discerning on 26 July "a profound radicalization of the Bolivian people" and "proper conditions for a revolution" but making support for Torres conditional on his revolutionary actions.\* While the coup was in progress PRENSA LATINA quoted

\* Castro's remarks on the revolutionary situation in Bolivia are reviewed in the TRENDS of 21 April, pages 25-26, and 28 July, pages 27-29.

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the Chilean CP organ FURQ CHILE as remarking that a victory of the "fascists," if it materialized, "would be the consequence of vacillations," although in reporting a Bolivian COR communiqué it left out the more direct charge that the plotters were able to use part of the state's resources because of "General Torres government's indecision and swaying from right to left."

The perpetrators of the coup were identified as the "fascists" of the Bolivian Socialist Falange and the Nacional Revolucionary Movement along with their "servants" within the armed forces. Havana's initial reaction to the new regime, headed by Col. Hugo Benzer Suarez, was to depict a curfew and martial law decree as the first step in a "violent repression" which the junta might "unleash at any moment." On the 24th, the GRAMMA editorial said a reign of "terror and revenge" had begun, with "armed rightist commandos attacking the headquarters of the leftist parties and the offices of labor unions and progressive newspapers." GRAMMA said there had never before in Bolivia's history been a regime "more illegitimate, more antipeople, more antinational, but saw grounds in its internal disunity and absence of popular backing for the judgment that it cannot last."

#### REASSERTION OF CUBAN ROLE IN HEMI SPHERE-WIDE CONFRONTATION

Charges that the coupists enjoyed "backing from abroad" were present in Cuban propaganda from the outset. A broadcast on the 19th cited a La Paz EL DIARIO report that the U.S. embassy had alerted its staff to a possible coup "that would occur at any moment," and PRENSA LATINA recalled the reported alert on the 23d to conclude that there was "no doubt about U.S. involvement." On the 21st PRENSA LATINA alleged that 8,000 men trained in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil were fighting the pro-regime forces in Bolivia, "an intervention by the next day that there would be supported by the Brazilian and Paraguayan regimes focussed on Brazilian military aspirations to get rid of the "too leftist" Torres and to separate the oil-rich department of Santa Cruz from Bolivia "as a first step toward its absorption by Brazil."

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GRAMMA's 24 August editorial drew the threads of this comment together in ascribing the success of the "bloodbath" against the Bolivian people to a "triple counterrevolutionary alliance" consisting of internal reaction and the Brazilian and Paraguayan "gorilla" regimes, masterminded by the United States. "Plotted coup was part of an overall strategy designed to isolate Cuba, Chile, and Peru and to 'discourage peoples which, as in Uruguay, are seriously threatening to sweep the representatives of oligarchy and imperialism from power.'"

Thus underscoring Castro's portrayal of a burgeoning revolutionary situation in which Cuba is no longer isolated, the editorial played the theme of Cuban-Bolivian affinity rooted in Quevara's guerrilla adventure and noted that some Bolivian labor leaders who had been in Cuba for the 26 July observance were now victims of the fighting. It held up a pledge of "Cuba's solidarity, her firm moral and material support, resolute and determined," for the Bolivian "struggle for liberation" as exemplary for all revolutionaries confronting "fascism and imperialism" in Latin America.

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